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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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Geneva foreign ministers' meeting: Soviet preconference tactics suggest that Moscow plans a number of procedural skirmishes at the foreign ministers' conference before discussing substantive issues. The Soviet member of the group making final technical arrangements for the conference cited the absence of agreement on participation in the conference, including the status of the two German delegations, and said this should be settled by the ministers before the first meeting. He argued that the German delegations should be seated with the four great powers.

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Thailand - North Vietnam: Thailand apparently has agreed to direct talks between its National Red Cross organization and the North Vietnamese Red Cross on repatriating the bulk of the predominantly pro-Communist 50,000 Vietnamese refugees in northeast Thailand. Such talks would represent an important departure from Bangkok's policy of avoiding any direct contact with Communist North Vietnam and, if successful, would give Hanoi a major propaganda victory at the expense of the Diem regime in South Vietnam.

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Laos: Laotian officials appear adamant in their opposition to continued French control of Laotian Army training, despite French claims that the Laotians prefer French training. The Laotian leaders identify the French Army with defeat in the Indo-China war and also object to what they consider the "colonial arrogance" and inefficiency of French officers. Paris, preparing for early US-French talks on the problem, insists that any American role be limited to "technical training," with only French personnel supervising combat training.

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Soviet Tactics at Geneva

Soviet preconference tactics suggest that Moscow plans a number of procedural skirmishes at the foreign ministers' conference before opening substantive discussions. The USSR apparently is attempting to force the ministers to meet before the opening session to discuss outstanding procedural questions including composition. The Soviet member of the four-power group responsible for technical arrangements in Geneva stated on 7 May that nothing could take place until the ministers had decided who should participate in the first meeting, and he flatly asserted that the Germans should be seated at the table. He also rejected a square-shaped conference table on the grounds that it would "prevent more than four participating powers." Already, Soviet propaganda has begun to refer to the talks as "the round-table conference in Geneva."

Soviet notes of 30 March had stated that the question of Polish and Czech "participation" could be settled at the conference itself, and that the question of the "representation" of the two German states was a "decided matter." This vague wording was accepted as indicating a desire not to obstruct the convening of a foreign ministers' conference by prior insistence on the composition; it reserved the USSR's right, however, to bring this matter up as soon as the conference convened. There have been hints that the USSR may intend to bring the nuclear test cessation issue before the foreign ministers' conference.

The Soviet delegate to the nuclear test talks asked the British delegate on 6 May for his views on the possibility of putting some of the unresolved issues of test suspension before the foreign ministers. Again, on 7 May he stated that the question of continuing sessions during the foreign ministers' conference would depend to a great extent on whether the ministers discuss the test cessation issue.] Soviet leaders may anticipate that, by introducing the nuclear test issue at the foreign ministers'

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conference, they can obtain agreement in principle for their present proposal at the Geneva nuclear test talks for a pre-determined quota of annual on-site inspections of phenomena suspected of having been nuclear explosions. They could then maintain that the actual number of annual inspections would be a suitable subject for discussion and agreement at the summit.

The counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Paris suggested to a US official that the USSR would be willing to guarantee the Berlin status quo in return for a reduction in Allied forces there, and an agreement to cease subversive activities in both East and West Berlin. Apart from Berlin, he said, the main points for discussion should be a German peace treaty and force reductions in Central Europe, taking into account the 1954 Paris agreements forbidding German development and possession of atomic weapons. He added that all parties would have to recognize the Oder-Neisse boundary.

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Thailand Plans Red Cross Talks With North Vietnam on Refugees

The Thai Government has accepted Hanoi's proposal for direct talks between the Thai and North Vietnamese National Red Cross chapters concerning the possible repatriation of the bulk of the 50,000 predominantly pro-Communist Vietnamese refugees in northeast Thailand, according to the Bangkok World, a usually reliable English-language daily. This climaxes months of serious consideration of the refugee problem by Thai authorities and on-the-scene observation of the refugee communities by a representative of the International Committee for the Red Cross. Bangkok reportedly will select its delegates to the conference next week, but the location is still undecided, with North Vietnam apparently favoring Geneva and Thailand arguing for a nearby neutral country.

Talks between the respective National Red Cross chapters of the two countries would represent a departure from Thailand's policy of avoiding any contacts with Communist North Vietnam, attesting to the importance Marshal Sarit attaches to solution of this long-standing security problem. The Thais may also have become convinced that current talks in Geneva of a similar nature between the Japanese and North Korean Red Cross chapters have provided them with a precedent which will minimize any adverse reaction from Thailand's Western allies.

There is some chance the talks may break down, particularly over arrangements for screening the refugees; however, if they should succeed, North Vietnam will achieve a major propaganda victory at the expense of the Diem regime in South Vietnam, which had earlier refused to accept the refugees.

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Laos Seeking Replacement of French in Military Training Role

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[On the eve of US/French negotiations in Paris on military training responsibilities in Laos, Laotian leaders remain strongly opposed to continued French control of army training, preferring American instruction instead. They identify the French Army with defeat at Dien Bien Phu and object to what they describe as the colonial arrogance and inefficiency of French officers. Laotian delegations to South Vietnam, by way of contrast, have been greatly impressed by the rapid progress of the Vietnamese armed forces under US guidance.]

[France is willing to turn over logistical training of the Laotian Army to the United States, but is strongly opposed to American participation in combat training. This position stems from France's desire to maintain its influence in Laos through its integral military role and from its concern over Communist reaction to any such "flagrant violation of the 1954 Geneva agreements," which Paris insists are still valid in Laos. The French apparently are confident that a bilateral accord reached with the US at Paris can be imposed on Laos without difficulty.]

[Until this problem is solved, effective training of the 24,000-man Laotian Army will continue to be delayed. The Phoui government is counting heavily on the army to implement its anti-Communist reform program.]

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